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The Volunteer Dimension in EFNEP

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To Assist You . . .

These lessons were developed at the request of states to assist with volunteer activities in the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP). The lessons are designed to help professional staff with motivating, identifying, recruiting, developing, and evaluating volunteers for EFNEP.

We hope these lessons will encourage and stimulate volunteering from the EFNEP target audience—that more individuals from limited resource communities will respond to the call to “help out” or “lend a hand.”

The lessons also anticipate more EFNEP volunteer involvement from resources outside the target audience.

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INTRODUCTION

The gift of service is an essential part of our American culture. In no other country of the world is volunteer service practiced to the degree it is in the United States. Volunteering is a privilege of a free people.

George Romney has said, "Nothing can melt human and social problems faster than the willingness of one individual to involve himself voluntarily in helping another individual overcome his problems."

Volunteers have always been the strong right arm of the Extension Service. The volunteer dimension in the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) follows the same historical pattern that has involved volunteer participation and leadership in other Extension programs. The services of the county professional staff and the work of aides in EFNEP can be extended to new areas in proportion to the number of volunteers recruited and trained to serve in the program. Most EFNEP jobs can be reinforced or enriched by volunteers.

WHO ARE VOLUNTEERS?

A volunteer is a person who gives time, talent, and service to others without pay. A volunteer may be a highly-trained, well-paid professional, or an unskilled person with very little academic training.

Volunteering is not a new idea, but there have been some new developments in recent years. Volunteers themselves are changing. Today, the socioeconomic conditions, the "ethnic" mix, and the ages of volunteers are more diversified.

YOUTH see volunteering as an opportunity to do something about community problems. They are idealistic about "causes" and want a chance to contribute. Lack of paid job opportunities increases the number of potential young volunteers. In some high schools and colleges, students can receive course credit for

volunteer jobs. Students majoring in languages, for instance, may be challenged by opportunities to help families with a language problem, such as Spanish-speaking migrants.

SENIOR CITIZENS represent a large source of volunteer leadership. The elderly find that doing things for others helps them feel useful.

MORE MALES of all age groups are becoming involved as volunteers.

BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY LEADERS are exercising "cooperative citizenship" by giving workers time off to serve on community projects.

RETIRED PROFESSIONALS often seek ways to share their knowledge. Many highly skilled individuals appreciate being asked to volunteer.

PEOPLE WITH LIMITED RESOURCES are becoming more important as a source of EFNEP "helpers."

MINORITY GROUPS are contributing more volunteers than in the past.

MIDDLE-INCOME AND MIDDLE-AGED INDIVIDUALS give many hours of volunteer leadership service to Extension.

PURPOSES OF LESSON SERIES

This series of lessons on the volunteer dimension in EFNEP has several purposes—

- To orient Extension staff to volunteer involvement in the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program, within the framework of Extension Service-U.S. Department of Agriculture (ES-USDA) guidelines.
- To encourage all EFNEP Extension staff members to become more committed to using volunteers.
- To help EFNEP aides understand their role in identifying volunteers, and recognize that volunteers can reinforce their own interests and those of their program families.
- To increase the quantity and quality of volunteer leadership in EFNEP.

- To help Extension staff understand some of the needs that motivate people to volunteer for EFNEP.

USING THE LESSONS

Most lessons in this series can be—

- Adapted for one-to-one teaching and small or large group training sessions
- Used alone in a series of meetings or in a workshop
- Used by state leaders in training county staff, or by county supervisors with experienced volunteers.

Suggestions for group activities are given with each lesson. Arrangements for a well-planned group lesson include obtaining a suitable meeting place with flexible seating facilities, and chalkboard, flipchart, or other visual aids.

SUGGESTIONS FOR PLANNING AN EFNEP VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

Planning and organization at the state and county levels should precede recruitment of volunteers.

State Level

1. Clearly define the roles and responsibilities of all staff members to be involved in the volunteer effort.

2. Designate one person on the state staff as director of the EFNEP volunteer program. This person should also serve as chairperson of the volunteer committee.

3. Assign staff personnel with backgrounds similar to that of the target audience to help train supervisory agents.

4. Develop training materials for volunteers and county staff.

5. Appoint a committee to help coordinate volunteer effort. Members might include—

- EFNEP coordinator
- Director of volunteers
- One or more state, area, and county staff members
- Representatives of state Extension advisory council and homemaker's council.

This committee's function might be to—

- Take inventory of strengths and weaknesses of the current EFNEP volunteer program.
- Formulate guidelines for planning, implementing, and evaluating a successful EFNEP volunteer program.
- Determine priority jobs for volunteers.
- Develop job description forms or instruments.
- Involve state Extension and homemaker's council in planning recruitment and service in the volunteer program.

Area and County

The county Extension professional staff, especially the supervising agent, is a key to the success of the EFNEP volunteer program. The professional staff is responsible for motivating, identifying, recruiting, supervising and evaluating EFNEP volunteers. The nutrition aide's role is to support the professional in working with volunteers.

Listed below are some suggestions for effective county involvement in the volunteer efforts.

Designate one person to coordinate the county EFNEP volunteer program.

Appoint a volunteer task force. Members could include representatives of—

- Professional staff, with the designated director as chairperson.
- Program families and youth.
- Experienced EFNEP volunteers.

This volunteer task force may—

- Identify specific EFNEP tasks for volunteers.
- Write job descriptions.
- Identify key individuals from the target audience to serve as "communication links" between the professionals and the potential volunteer. This "indigenous connector" could help identify "helpers," encourage EFNEP volunteering in the neighborhood, and emphasize the benefits for the volunteer worker in this service.

The county staff should review EFNEP guidelines in relation to volunteers and adapt them to the local situation.

GLOSSARY

EFNEP Volunteer: A person (adult or youth) who assists with adult or 4-H EFNEP, and who does not receive Extension funds for the service given.

EFNEP Helper: Another title for EFNEP volunteer—sometimes preferred by low-income volunteers.

Extension Professional Supervisor-instructor: The person in charge of organizing and conducting the lessons with the individuals who are learning.

Volunteer Trainee or Recruit: An individual receiving training in order to function effectively as an EFNEP helper.

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- 1 year subscription (6 reports)
- 2 year subscription (12 reports)

NOTES

NOTES

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Cooperative Extension Work: United States Department of Agriculture and State Land-Grant Universities Cooperating.
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